

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

CORBY CASTLE

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Name:	CORBY CASTLE
County:	Cumbria
District:	Carlisle (District Authority)
Parish:	Wetheral
label.localisation:	Latitude: 54.876276 Longitude: -2.8232194 National Grid Reference: NY 47275 53812 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: I List Entry Number: 1000662 Date first listed: 01-Jul-1985

Details

Pleasure grounds laid out by Thomas Howard during the period 1709-39, which retain a range of contemporary structures. Additions to the C18 parkland and pleasure grounds were made by Henry Howard and by Philip Howard.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Manor of Corby was granted to Hubert de Vallibus by Henry II. It passed to Andrew de Harcla, Earl of Carlisle, and was given to Sir Richard Salkeld in 1336 by Edward III. Lord William Howard bought part of the estate in 1605 and the remainder in 1624 for his second son, Frances, and the estate remained in the family until its sale in 1994. It remains in use (1997) as a private residence.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Corby Castle is situated immediately south of the village of Great Corby and east of Wetheral. The c 60ha site is on land which slopes south-westwards down to the River Eden, and the setting is predominantly rural and agricultural. The Eden forms the western and southern boundary of the site, and fencing along the edge of woodland the northern and north-eastern boundary. A by-road running between Cumwhitton and Warwick Bridge forms the eastern boundary, and the south-eastern boundary is a track running west, then south-west from the by-road to the banks of the Eden.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The principal entrance is situated on the north side of the site off the Cumwhitton by-road, where there are gates and gate piers surmounted by urns, flanked by splayed screen walls terminating with secondary piers (early to mid C19, listed grade I). On the north side of the gates, within the park, there is a classical entrance lodge of red sandstone with a tetrastyle Tuscan portico and full-width carved panel showing Apollo on a chariot (1817-18, listed grade I). A drive leads south-westwards to the east front of the Castle. The other entrance, on the south side of the site but also off the Cumwhitton by-road, is marked by a simple gate. This leads to a track running first west, then north-west across the park to the Castle via the home farm. This was formerly the public highway between Cumwhitton and Great Corby until it was diverted by Henry Howard (1757-1842) in 1805. The drive is shown in part on an estate map of 1752 when it linked with a

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semicircular ride through woodland north of the farm. The site could formerly be entered across the River Eden via a ferry from Wetheral, c 250m north-west of the Castle.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Corby Castle (listed grade I) has at its core a medieval tower house. Following C17 alterations and additions, the building was remodelled in 1812-14 by Peter Nicholson for Henry Howard, giving it a rectangular plan and neo-classical facades. Some 100m north of the Castle is a yard with stables and other ancillary buildings, some of C18 date, including a gardener's house.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The pleasure grounds consist of lawns around the Castle and a wooded riverside walk developed during the period 1709-39 by Thomas Howard (1677-1740) which takes advantage of the dramatic views along the river and is adorned with a series of structures and grottos. An account written in 1634 (quoted in Messenger 1997) mentions 'gardens and walkes to the riverside' but it is not known what form they took.

The Castle stands on a platform. On the east side is a forecourt with the main drive leading through it and a gravel turning-circle in front of the entrance. The northern boundary of this area is formed by the walls of the kitchen garden (early C18, listed grade I) and to the east a fence with ornamental iron gates separates the gardens from the park. From this side of the Castle there are views across rising parkland to a neo-classical dovecote (see below).

On the south side of the Castle there are long views southwards down the river and its valley. Lawns in front of the Castle are terraced down in two stages to the edge of a steep scarp, c 40m south of the Castle, which drops precipitously down to the river. Some 80m south-east of the Castle steps lead down the steep slope beside a cascade (early C18, listed grade I). On the east side of the steps, c 120m south-east of the Castle, is a c 4m high statue of the cyclops Polyphemus (early C18, listed grade II*). The steps continue down to the riverbank, where steep cliffs rising on the north and east sides form a natural amphitheatre. The cascade can be viewed from this point; it is c 30m in height with the top formed by a temple with a Venetian opening. Beneath this is a series of three low arches and below a series of naturalistic rock steps. At the base two openings lead to a grotto cut into the rock beneath the cascade. Immediately in front of this is a circular pool with a central plinth for a statue. Close to the riverbank, c 15m west of the base of the cascade and aligned with it, is a stone arch called the Water Gate from which a stepped cascade runs down to the edge of the river. A view of the cliff-side cascade from the base of the stepped cascade at the water's edge (or from a boat moored in this position) has the effect, through foreshortening, of making the two appear to be connected with a continuous fall of water, from the top of the cliff to the riverbank. Stands were attached to the Water Gate for audiences watching masques which were performed at the base of the cascade during the C18. Howard wrote a masque called *Sensuality Subdued* which was 'adapted to the scene of the cascade at Corby' from Milton's *Comus* (CL 1954).

Some 40m north of the cascade there are sandstone cliffs with three artificial caves carved in them. The two southern caves have cast-iron gates to the entrances. The northernmost has an entrance flanked by seats carved from the stone. An account of 1794 describes one of the grottoes with its tablets carved with an extract from Milton's *Paradise Lost* which included the lines: *There Eden's lofty banks Now nearer crown with their inclosures green, As with a rural mound, the champaign head Of a steep wilderness; whose hairy sides With thickets overgrown, grotesque and wild...* (Book IV, l 132)

That the combination of the natural riverside cliffs and the name of the river which suggested these lines was important to Howard's conception of the landscape is confirmed by Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, whose memoirs record Howard showing him the extract in 1734. Clerk observes that it 'very near resembles the description one would give of Corby Castle' (quoted in Messenger 1997).

A broad grassed walk, called the Green Walk, leads south from the cascade along the riverbank, giving views up and down the river. On the east side of the walk is a steep wooded slope, and set into this, c 200m south of the Castle, is a grotto which consists of a chamber cut in sandstone with a stream issuing from it. Above this, c 10m to the east and at the top of the slope, is St Catherine's Well, a plinth surmounted by a cross built by Philip Howard (1793-1882) during the 1840s. The Green Walk continues along the riverbank and beside it, c 500m south of the Castle, is another, smaller grotto in the form of a square chamber cut in the sandstone with a central plinth and the remains of an C18 statue.

The walk continues, and c 550m south of the Castle there is a stone salmon coop (listed grade I) between a river island and the east shore, which is thought to have C12 origins. Close to the point at which the course of the river turns eastwards, and c 700m

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south of the Castle, there is a building in the form of a Tuscan Temple called the Tempietto (early C18, listed grade I). This acts as a terminus of the vista down the river from the Castle, which is now obscured by mature trees. A description of Corby written in 1794 (Hutchinson) states that the Green Walk had tablets of stone carved with quotations from Horace and Shakespeare situated at various points between the cascade and the Tempietto which drew attention to particular views or the natural qualities of particular spots. The estate map of 1752 map shows the Tempietto at the bottom of an oval clearing called the elliptical lawn, which corresponds to some extent with the pattern of woodland which still exists. A path leading across the top of this area and running northwards along the edge of woodland corresponds with a path shown as an avenue or ride on the same map.

The walk continues around the bend in the river, from this point representing an extension laid out by Philip Howard in the mid C19. On the east side of the path, c 750m south of the Castle, is a statue of St Constantine (1843, listed grade II), positioned opposite a sandstone cliff on the far side of the river which lies outside the registered area. This cliff contains artificial caves, called St Constantine's Cells, which are thought to be of medieval origin and associated with nearby Wetheral Priory (Carlisle Museums and Art Galleries 1985). The walk continues along the riverbank and a stone shelter with a seat within it, probably of C19 date, is situated on the east side of the path c 800m south of the Castle.

Thomas Howard gave an account of the pleasure grounds in 1733, describing the situation of the Castle above the Eden and continuing: 'which together with the Grotesque and uncommon yet beautiful grounds about it, gives it the appearance of a finish'd landskip made up of all the scenery of nature and capable of furnishing a Composition of Images, for the variety of Picture and Prospect.' (TCWAAS 1979). Corby was subsequently visited and admired by many commentators including Sir John Clerk who described the Green Walk, cascade and statues in 1734. William Gilpin described the grounds as 'the most admired in Cumberland' in 1772 and Walter Scott praised them in 1815 (quoted in Messenger 1997). J C Loudon described the grounds as 'singularly grand and picturesque' in 1824 (ibid).

PARK The parkland lies to the south and east of the Castle. To the east the land rises to an eminence called Castle Hill, and there are belts of woodland and scattered mature trees which are the remnants of more extensive woodland shown on the OS 1st edition map surveyed 1860. Castle Hill was described in 1687-8 as 'a large round hill covered with plump of oakwood?' (Messenger 1997). An estate map of 1752 shows this woodland with a system of semicircular and radial rides within it, and partial evidence, in the form of the route of a drive, survives for this. The extreme north-east corner of the park is called The Wilderness and is shown with a system of clearings linked by sinuous paths on the 1752 map. Some evidence that work was started but not necessarily completed survives in the form of embanked paths in the area (Messenger 1997). A dovecote (C17, refronted early C19, listed grade I) with a temple portico attached to the north side is situated c 750m to the south-east of the Castle, on an eminence from which views northwards over the park to the Castle are obtained. To the south of it is the home farm, called Byrehill (farmhouse C17, listed grade II). The southern part of the park is largely under arable cultivation.

KITCHEN GARDEN The kitchen garden is entered from an arched opening in a stone wall flanked on each side by a pair of niches (listed grade I) which was built 1812-17 for Henry Howard. The entrance is surmounted by the reset carved stone arms of Lord William Howard and his wife Elizabeth Dacre which date from the C17. This grand entrance is set into a brick wall which forms the north side of a forecourt in front of the Castle's east front. It leads into a walled garden which is divided into two by a brick wall running from west to east with bothies and sheds attached to its northern side. An entrance in the east wall leads to the stable courtyard and gardener's house. The southern part of the garden is shown on the 1752 estate map with a building in the approximate position of the gardener's house. The northern part was added in 1808 when Catherine Howard records work on the wall of the 'Back Garden' to 'Fence out the village' (Diary, in Messenger 1997). An account written in 1687-8 mentions 'orchyards & bowling green' (Denton, quoted in Messenger 1997) but it is not known where they were situated.

REFERENCES

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OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1860 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1901

Archival items T Howard, Manuscript description of Corby dated 1733, (Scottish Record Office: GD18/5093, quoted in TCWAAS 79 (New Series), (1979)) Catherine Howard, Diaries for 1800-26, (Carlisle Record Office: DX/BRA/15/10, quoted in Messenger 1997)

Description written: July 1997 Register Inspector: CEH Edited: March 1999

Legal

This garden or other land is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest.